THE

PATH TO HAPPINESS,

EXPLORED AND ILLUSTRATED.

Les hommes n'ayant pû guerir la mort, la misere, l'ignorance, se sont avisés, pour se rendre heureux, de n'y point penser.

PASCAL.

Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

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CHAPTER I.

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CHAPTER I.

The vanity of human pursuits.

AMONG the many painful reflections that are wont to occur to the serious and benevolent mind; there is perhaps scarcely any thing more melancholy, than to consider the calamitous state of this disordered world, even in the most civilized, and best regulated societies. The distresses and disappointments under which numbers are daily sinking, and to which all are exposed: with the obvious discontent of those who are not only exempted from special suffering, but surrounded with all the luxuries of life, extort many a fruitless wish that the illusions with which the moſt of men are fascinated were dispelled, and that they might learn to distinguish between *real*, and *imaginary* good.

But the vanity of human pursuits, is a lesson, which though daily confirmed by facts, and of the greatest importance to our peace, will not perhaps be easily received by those who have not fully proved the reality of it in their own condition. For we seldom learn any thing to good purpose, but what is acquired in the painful school of experience; and 'at the first entrance into the world, 'when the imagination is active, the affec-'tions warm, and the heart a stranger to 'deceit, and consequently to suspicion, 'many delightful dreams of happiness will 'be formed.' No sooner does reason begin to dawn, than the infant mind presumes to look forward with desire to some future period, when deliverance from certain restrictions, or the enjoyment of certain pleasures will be vouchsafed; pleasures, which though trivial or ridiculous in the eye of maturer age, are in themselves perhaps, not more vain, and far more innocent than many which occupy some of the most celebrated among mankind. From childhood to youth, from youth to maturity, from maturity even to

decrepitude, all, in various ways, are engaged in the same ardent search; while the happiness they seek, like the *ignis fatuus* that deludes the benighted traveller, flies faster the more eagerly it is pursued; or, if at length it appear within their reach, they catch—and grasp a vapour!

So much has this painful truth some times obtruded on the mind, that men have been tempted to look with an eye of envy on the beasts that perish. No vain regrets, and bitter reflections on the past, ever seem to disturb their repose.—No anxious cares and projects for the future, to embitter their enjoyments. They rest satisfied in the present gratification, incapable of exercising those mental powers that constitute man's chief superiority; and which yet, as they are too generally applied, are perhaps the occasion of his greatest misery.

Let us not however have the temerity to suppose, that the infinitely wise and beneficient Creator of the universe, HE who made

man after his own image, endowed him with the noble faculties of reason to make him wretched. To suppose this, we must not only altogether disregard the assertions of revelation, but the dictates of human reason; which though unable indeed to obtain a satisfactory demonstration of the soul's immortality, deduces it's most powerful arguments from the earnest, yet unsatisfied desire of felicity so strongly implanted in the heart of man.

But though happiness, like some fair and tender exotic which droops and withers when transplanted to a ruder clime, is not made to flourish in the barren soil of this world; it is certain, that a portion of it, may even here be attained. But alas! men seek this treasure where it is not to be found:—dissipation, fame and fortune, according to the various tastes of different minds, are the beaten paths which are supposed to lead to this desired object;—and though none who tread them find their expectation answered, others are not deterred from following in the same unsuccessful track.

What pains are bestowed by the votaries of dissipation to stun the voice of reason and reflection, and to waste in the merest trifles that invaluable talent *time*, so short and uncertain in it's duration, and which when gone can never be retrieved! Continually engaged in a toilsome round of unsatisfying pleasures, that distract the mind, impair the health, and only tend to make the common scenes of life irksome and insipid; a prey to sleepless nights, anxious days, and hopes mostly ending in disappointment, there are few indeed to be found who have less conception of genuine peace and satisfaction. 'Alas Sir!' said Dr. Johnson once in conversation with Mr. Boswell, 'these grand houses, fine gar-'dens and publick amusements, are only 'struggles for happiness. When I first en-'tered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and 'gay sensation to my mind, such as I never 'experienced any where else. But as Xer-'xes wept when he viewed his immense 'army, and considered that not one of that 'great multitude would be alive one hun-'dred years afterwards; it went to my

'heart to consider, that there was not one in 'all that brilliant circle who was not afraid 'to go home and think; but that the thoughts 'of each individual there would be distress-'ing when alone.'

But if it be deplorable, thus to debase the noble faculties of the soul in frivolities beneath the attention of a rational creature; there is another description of persons perhaps still more dangerously misled; and who, if possible, are at a greater distance from the happiness they pursue. I mean those who being fascinated in early life by the perusal of novels and romances, have deluded themselves with the hope of enjoyments never to be realized, qualifications neither to be attained or even desired, and characters which are no where to be found. Of all the various evils that corrupt the minds of youth in the present day, there are many less specious, but none more injurious than this. The morality to which these books often pretend, only serve to disguise the poison they infuse, and excite a fatal degree of pride and self compla-

cency; while the pathetic tales and *elegant distresses* with which they abound, instead of inspiring sentiments of enlarged and disinterested benevolence, rather tend to steel the heart against those daily scenes of misery which it is our duty to compassionate and relieve. 'That 'creation of refined and subtile feelings 'reared by the authors of novels has an ill 'effect, not only on our ideas of virtue, but 'also on our estimate of happiness. Such a 'sickly sort of refinement creates imaginary 'evils and distresses, and imaginary blessings and enjoyments which embitter the common disappointments, and depreciate the 'common attainments of life. This affects 'the temper doubly, both with respect to ourselves and others; with respect to ourselves, 'from what we think *ought* to be our 'lot—with regard to others, from what we 'think *ought* to be their sentiments. It inspires a certain childish pride of our own 'superior delicacy, an unfortunate contempt of the plain worth, and the ordinary, 'but useful occupations of those around 'us.'

No sooner does a young person imbibe this fatal poison, than she immediately discovers herself to be unhappy! Her daily employments, her accustomed pursuits and associates are now no longer capable of interesting. The presence and converse of her relatives and friends become irksome and insipid. Introduced, as it were, into a higher region, and aspiring after more refined enjoyments; she sighs to meet some *kindred spirit* who can share in all the feelings of her heart. The sentimental and exalted endearments of love and friendship are, in her eyes, the only source of all genuine felicity: and as it is always easy to believe what we wish, if an object endowed with powers to please present himself, fancy will readily supply every deficiency, and pourtray a perfect character; while the highest satisfaction of which the human mind is capable will be expected to result from his society.

Happy will it be indeed, in such a case, if inexperienced, unsuspecting youth do not fall a sacrifice to base and designing seduc-

tion! But supposing things to take the most favourable turn imaginable; and two *congenial hearts* possessed of the most *exquisite sensibility*, after various extraordinary and most interesting adventures, at length happily united—Shall we suppose that the same blissful scene, which winds up the novel or the play, will continue through many years in a series of uninterrupted delight? Alas! no—the sky, that seemed so bright and serene on the entrance into this enchanted path, will soon be obscured by chilling damps and gloomy clouds. If no calamitous event intervene, *ennui* and insipidity will certainly succeed. Many mortifying discoveries of imperfection on each side will be made, and a variety of *vulgar*, *common* cares intrude to engross the attention, sour the temper and interrupt the enjoyment, that had been expected: and, after all, it will be well, if that which began in the most extravagant attachment, an attachment built on too frail a basis to be permanent, do not terminate in indifference or disgust.

Far more tranquil and less irrational than these romantic visionaries is the simple labourer or mechanic; who daily engaged in some useful occupation, has little opportunity for the creation of imaginary distresses; and who tasting more sweetness in the common comforts of life, is not reduced to the sad necessity of devising expedients to *kill the time*, which often hangs so heavy on the hands of his superiors.

But whether we seek for happiness in the circles of dissipation, the regions of romance, the flowery path of sensual pleasures, or the more steep and thorny ascent of ambition, fame, or fortune—the same event is sure to all: disappointment will certainly succeed. "The eye" says Solomon, "is not satisfied "with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing." Those very airs which at their first performance so charmed us, that we thought we could listen to them for ever, often disgust by too frequent repetition. The same prospect which we once deemed so delightful, is at length become tiresome and uninteresting.

Even yon sumptuous villa, and those beautiful grounds, on which the owner bestowed such expence and pains, that at first, it appeared to him little short of a *terrestrial paradise*, have now lost so much of their attractions; that while others come from far to admire his taste, and envy his felicity, he finds more charms and satisfaction in walking on a neighbouring heath!

'He sighs—for after all by slow degrees
'The spot he lov'd has lost the pow'r to please;
'The Prospect, such as might enchant despair,
'He views it not, or sees no beauty there;'

COWPER

LUCINDA, a lady remarkably endowed with the various gifts of beauty, wit and affluence; possessed of every accomplishment, and surrounded, as she herself acknowledges, with every thing that the world deems essential to happiness, in conversing a short time ago unreservedly with a friend, burst into tears, and confessed that she could hardly help envying a poor lame beggar, who was just then passing by the door. Her temper, she said,

had been spoiled by unlimited indulgence; she felt wearied and discontented with all around her; and while many looked up to her with envy and admiration, she thought herself one of the most wretched of human beings! Not that any religious scruples, or fears of futurity destroy this lady's peace; for she lives in a total indifference about these things, or rather in a state of infidelity. But being possessed of too strong an understanding, long to be interested by the trifles with which weaker minds are amused; she feels with peculiar poignancy the disappointments and vanity of human life.

Many perhaps might be led to suspect the truth of what has been asserted: but LUCINDA's case is a certain fact. So true it is that vexation and satiety are inscribed on all earthly enjoyments! And in some lamentable instances where these are inordinately pursued, the loss of health, reason, property, and every thing that is dear, at length proves the inevitable consequence.

The rich and great, though possessed of

many gratifications which others are unable to procure, have yet cares and anxieties peculiar to themselves; and are often strangers to some of the sweetest enjoyments of domestic life. Courteous compliments and servile attendants, will do little to compensate the want of genuine confidence and friendship; any more than splendid equipages and elegant entertainments will avail to soothe the rankling wounds inflicted by envy or suspicion. Who so restless and unquiet, so subject to the influence of turbulent and malignant passions, as the lofty and ambitious? or who so liable to fall, as those that have climbed the tottering pinnacle of preferment? Frail indeed is the foundation of that happiness, which is built on the precarious favour of the great, or that depends on the breath of popular applause; which often prefers *novelty* to *merit*, and has too many candidates, to bestow on one, that tribute of admiration which each conceives to be his due.

Nor is that insatiable thirst for knowledge which animates the *devotees* of science, though far more flattering to the self compla-

cency of man, less attended with vanity and vexation, and inimical to his highest welfare. The pursuit indeed, deeply engages and interests: but the powers of the human mind are so limited, and it's enquiries so unsuccessful, that perhaps the greatest attainment of the most profound philosopher, is to discover the depth of his ignorance, and the insufficiency of his understanding: while unhappily, by the incessant investigation of difficulties it is impossible to explore, he is often quite unfitted for the comforts and duties of society. And what is still worse, he has probably acquired such a sceptical turn of thinking, as leads him to look with contempt on those, who submit with simplicity to the teaching of revelation.

It is not however to be denied, that some degree of comfort and satisfaction is annexed to certain temporal advantages. None surely, but a proud, self-deluded Stoick can deny, that it is a great mercy to be preserved from the miseries of penury and want, to

be endowed with a healthful vigorous constitution, to be able to enjoy the beauties of this fair creation, to have an unblemished reputation with our fellow creatures, or to taste the sweets of social life, the most refined and rational of our delights. And God, who "gives us richly all things to enjoy," by no means prohibits our temperate indulgence in the blessings he has graciously vouchsafed us. But then these, alone, are insufficient to fill and satisfy the immortal mind, and to afford rest and complacency to the soul. Ask the *few* who, *peculiarly* favoured with the smiles of Providence, have been *enabled* to make the experiment. They will tell you, if they speak ingenuously, there was an *aching void*, a something still wanting to complete their happiness; though perhaps they could scarcely define it. And thus they either endeavoured not to think at all: or, if they did think, their reflections generally ended in peevishness and repining, and excited a number of imaginary wants; which if gratified, would still leave them in the same restless, discontented

situation. So just is that observation of the poet

"Man's sickly soul tho' turn'd and toss'd for ever,
"From side to side can rest on nought but Thee."

But laying aside this representation of things, which by the multitude, who wish to deceive themselves, with gay dreams of preconceived felicity, will doubtless be thought *sombre* and unjust; let us, on the contrary, imagine the objects which different men pursue not only *attained*, but really affording much of the happiness supposed to be contained in them—there is one truth, none will have the presumption to deny—that they are *perishing* and *uncertain*. A few fleeting hours or days *may*, in various ways, deprive us of them—a few short years *must* take them away for ever! "Their inward thought is" (saith the Psalmist) "that their houses shall endure for "ever, and their dwelling place to all gene-"rations; they call their lands after their "own names: nevertheless man being in "honour abideth not; he is like the beasts "that perish[1]."

[1] Ps. xlix. 11, 12.

Oh! how soon can the hand of Providence wither all our fairest blossoms, and darken our brightest prospects! how many are there, who perhaps but yesterday were exulting in the possession of fame and fortune, now sinking unlamented to the grave, cut off by some unforeseen event; or stretched on a bed of pain and sickness, unable with all their wealth and authority to purchase a moment's ease! How many, who but a little time since were running the full round of dissipated pleasures, in the bloom of youth and beauty, are now rendered incapable of every gratification!—While some possibly who in the morning were surrounded with all the comforts and elegancies of life, in the evening are reduced almost to beggary by devouring flames.—And to descend into the calamities of domestic life—what instances of refined and exquisite distresses shall we behold? all the hopes that the fond parent had been fostering for her beloved offspring destroyed by a sudden stroke!—The cruel wounds inflicted on the sensible and affectionate, by the unkind behaviour of their

nearest friends and relatives.—Or those who had long been united by the tenderest ties, torn asunder by violence, almost as great as the pangs which dissever soul and body. Some, weeping over the pains and sorrows of the friends they love, but are unable to relieve. And others, feeling themselves daily wasted by a slow, but inveterate malady, that not only threatens soon to draw a final veil over the objects they most have loved, but even now renders them insipid and unavailing.

These are sad scenes!—but misery cannot be averted by forgetfulness. Let not the gay and prosperous turn away from them—for they are replete with the most useful instruction, and such as all, more or less, must observe and experience.

On a view like this, it might well be exclaimed, 'what a miserable creature is man!' And such indeed he would be, if this were all. Endowed with capacities for happiness he seems unable to attain, and possessed of powers which render him capable of distresses

peculiar to himself; his lot appears to be the most deplorable in the creation: so that, if annihilation were to succeed his departure from this world, the unconscious animals would seem greatly to have the advantage. But, this is *not all*.—The unknown state on which he is about to enter, has, for the mind that thinks, more terrors than any he can leave behind. Man *must* go hence to be no more seen; and he goes—he knows not whither—'clouds and darkness rest upon 'it'—a life of disappointment, care, and suffering—a death full of dread and uncertainty!

Such, without exaggeration, appears to be our melancholy state, unaided by the light of revelation. In circumstances so dark, so intricate and perplexing, it were natural to think that the human mind would eagerly catch at every ray of light, that might gild the gloomy scene, and promise relief under the complicated miseries to which man is exposed. 'Oh! who can tell me' (might he be supposed to say) 'of some friendly power to support and shelter me, during the storms of this tempes-

'tuous life? and oh! above all, who can tell me, 'after its toilsome round is ended, whether, 'I may find a haven of rest and peace at 'last?' Surely, we might conceive, that in the consideration of things like these, the most distant report of a revelation from GOD of "peace and goodwill to men" would be the most welcome, the most interesting, that ever sounded in mortal ears.

CHAPTER II.

The importance of revelation.

"LIFE and IMMORTALITY are brought to "light by the gospel[1]!" What then is the reception given to these "glad tidings?" Immediately on their publication, do we find men all around eagerly enquiring into these important discoveries; relinquishing their pursuit of riches, pleasures and honours, which they know at best to be perishing and uncertain, to seek after a "kingdom that cannot be "moved," "an inheritance that fadeth not "away?" Do we see them, struck with alarm at the awful declarations contained in the word of God, earnestly asking how they may "escape from the wrath to come" and be made partakers of everlasting felicity? And above all, filled with wonder and admiration

[1] 2 Tim. xi 10

at the stupendous display of God's mercy and goodness in giving his own Son to die for their redemption, do we see them forsaking the wearisome paths of sin and vanity, to follow the Redeemer in the way which he has appointed? Alas! no—it is far otherwise—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain "king which made a marriage for his son, "and he sent forth his servants to call them "which were bidden to the wedding, and "they *would not come*.—But they made light "of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, "another to his merchandise [1]!"

We know how exactly this was verified on the first promulgation of the gospel, and what opposition it met with, both from the Jews, and the polished and enlightened Greeks and Romans. And even to this day the same difficulties and obstacles still occur in every heathen idolatrous nation, where attempts are made to introduce Christianity. But to bring the matter nearer to ourselves, what is the result in this country, where the gospel has

[1] Matt. xxii. 2, 3. 5.

been professedly received, and generally established? Are not the few, who abide by its truths and precepts, universally derided as singular and precise? Is not the very mention of Christ, or conversing on religious topics in polite companies, deemed discreditable and inconsistent with the rules of good breeding? And is there any volume almost so utterly neglected as the Bible, though numbers who disregard its instruction, very inconsistently acknowledge it to be the only infallible guide to eternal happiness? Many indeed, altogether reject it's testimony without enquiry; or think it of little consequence what they believe, provided they do but lead what the world calls a virtuous life. And of the numbers who profess to believe the scriptures, and would doubtless revolt with horror at the imputation of infidelity, the greater part give only a cold assent to revelation; have never examined and embraced it for themselves, but simply echo with their lips the creeds and catechisms they learned in the nursery; while their understandings remain uninformed, and their hearts unaffected.

If a revelation had been vouchsafed us, to point out the path, to pleasure, fortune or preferment, how closely would it be studied, how diligently investigated! and yet, what are all the riches and honours in the universe, compared to the favour of the Almighty, peace of conscience, serenity of mind, and a prospect of never ending felicity? Oh! that those who have been long wearying themselves in the ways of vanity, "spending their "money for that which is not bread and their "labour for that which satisfieth not[1]," would at length turn aside and behold that glorious SUN, whose beams can alone enlighten the mind with heavenly truth and heal the broken heart[2]! Oh! that they would come to Him who has invited "all that are weary and "heavy laden," with promises of peace and rest to their souls!

Perhaps of all the melancholy proofs with which the world abounds of man's natural dislike to true religion, there is none more

[1] Isai. lv. 2. [2] Malachi. iv. 2.

obvious and surprising than his utter indifference to that which most concerns his happiness and which seems most calculated to awaken the liveliest emotions of his mind. The subjects on which the scriptures treat, are of infinite, of eternal importance, as must be confessed by all who allow the being of a God and the immortality of the soul. The event which they predict and declare isnothing less than the incarnation of the Son of God himself, who "being in the form of "God thought it not robbery to be *equal* "with God: but made himself of no reputa-"tion, and took upon him the form of a "servant and was made in the likeness of "men: and being found in fashion as a man, "he humbled himself, and became obedient "to death, even the death of the cross[1]!" and yet, wonderful to tell, the declaration of this stupendous truth obtains not a hundredth part of the attention which is generally bestowed on any art or science!

It is by no means intended to insinuate that

[1] 1 Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

it is the duty of every one to receive the Bible with implicit faith as a revelation from God, merely because it has been pronounced so by his parents or tutors; or because Providence has cast his lot in a Christian land. Doubtless we ought to make every possible enquiry into that, on which all our present hopes and future felicity are said to depend; and by which all our conduct through life is to be directed. But unhappily men *will not enquire*. The principles and precepts of Christianity, though superlatively suited to make us happy, so wound our self-complacency, and so interfere with our favourite pursuits; that the scriptures are almost universally treated with neglect, or rejected with supercilious disdain.

Let any one who has hitherto persevered in this mistaken conduct, venture to descend a little into his own heart and ask himself the *real cause* of his indifference or dislike to revelation.—Will it not be found, that immersed in vanity, or led away by the fashionable

opinions of those who disdain to think like the *common herd* of mankind, he never condescended to reflect about it at all? Or else, under the baneful influence of some favourite pursuit, some darling passion, contrary to the dictates of the inspired writers, he has endeavoured as much as possible to persuade himself, either that these authors never existed, were impostors, or imposed upon by others? And thus, finding it for his present comfort to disbelieve, he condemns that which he has never once impartially examined.

For the mind that is sincerely enquiring into the truth of revelation, there is certainly the most satisfactory evidence to be obtained, and such as has proved sufficient to convince men of the greatest talents and strongest reason. We cannot surely suppose that a BACON, a BOYLE, a NEWTON and a LOCKE suffered themselves to be enslaved by vulgar prejudices; and, that on a subject of infinite importance they gave their cordial assent to that which they had never duly considered. Or that the *beaux esprits* of the

present day, who are unquestionably more eminent for dress, horse-racing, play, and dissipated amusements, than for close thinking and accurate investigations, have attained to more profound discoveries, than these great men, who have hitherto been deemed the honour of our country.

As some proof of what has been advanced, let us consider the very dark and deplorable state the world was in, previous to the introduction of Christianity. If it were not, that on this subject we have perhaps no particular temptation to incredulity, the very existence of the idolatrous abominations and absurdities, that formerly prevailed among the heathen, might seem as difficult to be believed as the most mysterious parts of our religion. That the grossest vices should have been deified—that birds and beasts, reptiles and vegetables —nay, wood and stone "the work of men's "hands[1]" should have become the objects of general adoration, is certainly the greatest disgrace to man's understanding that

[1] Isai. xliv. 9—19.

can be conceived. And these errors, together with many other ridiculous and monstrous notions and practices, not proper to be here related, seem permitted by divine wisdom, to shew how little, man, left to himself, is able to discover of the true nature of God, and to what dreadful evils he is disposed. The pernicious effects of this ignorance on the morals of mankind, is most forcibly described in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans[1]; and must be sufficiently obvious to all who examine history devoid of those dangerous partialities for heroes and philosophers, which, through a deplorable mistake in the present mode of education, are often instilled in the minds of unthinking youth.

We shall find that in the highest state of heathen refinement, vices were publickly connived at, which in Christian countries are not thought of without detestation; while the most admired virtues and splendid actions among the pagans, in general proceeded from

[1] Rom. i. 20.—33.

no higher principles, than pride, ambition, and an insatiable thirst for glory.

In such a state of the world as this, what an extraordinary, and, on any natural principles, unaccountable circumstance it is, that the religion of Christ, so contrary to the prevailing opinions both of Jews [1] and gentiles, so repugnant to all the passions and prejudices of the human heart, should, against the strongest opposition of all ranks and orders of men, make it's way in the world, through the endeavours of a few obscure, unlettered individuals! That these persons were deceivers, cannot reasonably be supposed, when we consider, that, as far as this life was concerned, no other promise was given to them, no better prospect was before them—than universal contempt and persecution. Doubtless their inducement for bearing testimony to the Saviour they followed, and whose extra-

[1] Though the Jews were in expectation of their Messiah according to the wonderful prediction of Daniel, c. ix. 24—27. they hoped for a temporal Prince who should excel in power and splendour, and make them victorious over their enemies.

ordinary miracles and resurrection they had beheld, proceeded from a deep conviction of the important truths He taught, zeal for the glory of the God they worshipped, and the most pure, disinterested benevolence for the souls of men. Nor were their beneficent desires disappointed. In this respect, the remarkable words of Gamaliel have been literally fulfilled, and are fulfilling to this very day. "If this counsel or this work be of *men*, "it will come to nought, but if it be of *God* "ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be "found even to fight against God[1]."

There is perhaps no proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures more striking than the accomplishment of the prophecies they contain, many of which have taken place in latter ages. The description of the person and sufferings of Christ in the fifty-third of Isaiah, and the seventy-years captivity foretold by the twenty-seventh of Jeremiah; the destruction of those once great and flourishing cities, NINEVEH, BABYLON and TYRE the

[1] Acts, v. 38, 39. Nahum. Isai. xiii. 14. Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5.

last of which has been but of late years reduced to that state of entire desolation, which according to modern travellers exactly corresponds with these ancient predictions[1]. And, above all, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, whose existence and remarkable situation continues a kind of standing miracle to this very day; makes it evident to every candid enquirer, that there is the greatest reason to believe the books of the Old and New Testament to be the word of that God, who "declareth the end from "the beginning, and from ancient times the "things that are not yet done."

But besides these external evidences of Christianity, is there not great satisfaction to be obtained by considering the very sublime and suitable language the scriptures use con-

[1] The place in which *Babylon* stood is now so desolated that there is no vestige whatever of the city; and *Tyre* is literally nothing more than a place where fishermen spread their nets. —See that very useful and judicious work Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.

[2] Isai. xlv, 10.

cerning God? 'The Bible alone introduces 'the Governor of the universe speaking with 'that majesty, simplicity and authority which 'become him, and promulgating laws and or-'dinances, that are worthy of him, and which, 'if observed, would tend to the universal hap-'piness of mankind.' Let us contrast the august descriptions of God contained in Isaiah, and many passages of the psalms and prophets with the low, gross, absurd ideas entertained by some of the finest pagan writers respecting their deities; and determine which is most agreeable to truth and reason. Let us compare also, the precepts of Christ and his apostles with the morality of the Stoicks, or the Epicureans, and consider, which would most conduce to rectify the miseries of this disordered world. That benign command of our Saviour to "do unto all men as we would "they should do unto us," extends far beyond the most refined and exalted virtue of the heathen world, which at best was partial and selfish.

Among many of the philosophers of Greece

and Rome it is true we find much of self-denial, contempt of sensual pleasures, public spirit, and patriotic zeal; but we learn nothing of humility, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and universal philanthropy. The three first of these, were even thought mean and contemptible, and the last so much disregarded, that in Cicero's Offices, which is deemed the best system of pagan ethicks, there is little mention made of the duty of succouring the afflicted, and providing for the indigent; at least, from truly benevolent and disinterested motives. Nor does it appear, that among all the public splendid edifices for which the city of Rome was famed, there were any of those structures for the reception of the destitute and diseased with which our metropolis happily abounds [1].

If it be objected, that 'however convincing 'the evidences may be, the Christian religion 'contains mysteries we cannot comprehend, 'and therefore are not bound to believe,' what does this prove, but that man is too

[1] See Milner's Eccl. Hist. vol i. p. 552.

proud to submit his understanding to the Almighty who created him? And that, though indisputably surrounded with mysteries and miracles, and utterly unable to explain the formation of the meanest plant, he is so arrogant and unreasonable as to require a religion without mystery; and to think that a Being, who is in himself and all his works perfectly incomprehensible, should give him a revelation, the whole of which his feeble and limited capacity might be able clearly to comprehend!

But some, whose objections assume a more modest garb, declare that the difficulty they find in receiving the sacred scripture, arises from a consideration of the extreme insignificance of the human race in respect of the universe at large; and thence they would infer the improbability that God should stoop so low, as to notice, in so wonderful a manner, such atoms in the creation. On this subject however, we are very little able to decide.—Matter and spirit, being of natures entirely different, can admit of no comparison with

each other. The latter is unspeakably superior to the former; and as it is not the *magnitude*, but the *kind* of being, that constitutes it's real dignity; an individual of the human species, endowed with consciousness and the powers of reason, and capable of an immortal existence, may perhaps possess more intrinsic value than the whole irrational creation.

Supposing however, that it were otherwise: Is not God's condescension and goodness magnified in proportion to our meanness and demerit? And may we not conceive, that by the whole plan of redemption the Almighty meant to display his glorious attributes to all created intelligences? as the apostle indeed intimates when he says "to the intent that "now unto the principalities and powers in "heavenly places might be known *by the* "*church* the manifold wisdom of God [1]."

But it is pride, and not humility that raises these difficulties; since the genuine exercise of this disposition greatly consists in submitting

[1] Ephes. iii. 10.

our reason to the testimony of God, and in that simple child-like spirit inculcated by our Redeemer, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein[1]."

——————'Humble love
'And not proud reason keeps the door of heaven.'

'Not deeply to discern, not much to know,
'Mankind was born to wonder and adore.'

YOUNG.

[1] Luke, xviii. 17.

CHAPTER III.

Remarks on the doctrines of revelation.

THE limits of this little work will not admit of further arguments in proof of the truth of our religion, which the sincere and diligent enquirer may see at large, in publications that treat expressly on the subject[1]. Neither is it deemed requisite, for the present purpose; since, as it has been before hinted, the indifference or dislike, which men evince for revelation, arises in general far more from the state of the heart, than from any deficiency of information.

For by those, who do at all pretend to receive the Bible as a revelation from God, it must certainly be thought reasonable and necessary to abide by the doctrines, and obey the

[1] Leland on the Deistical Writers. Doddridge's Sermons on the Evidences of the Gospel. Paley's Evidences.

precepts it contains; agreeably to the words of the apostle, who tells us that "*all* scripture "is given by inspiration of God." Now it is certain, that most of these doctrines are as opposite to the opinions we naturally embrace, as the precepts are disagreeable to our inclinations, and contrary to our pursuits. What for instance can be more offensive to our self-complacency than the doctrine of *human depravity* and our *universal apostacy* from God? what more repugnant to the fancied dignity of our nature, than those passages of scripture which declare "that the imagination of "man's heart is evil from his youth[1]:" that "the heart is deceitful above all things, "and desperately wicked[2];" and that "out "of the heart proceed evil thoughts, &c?" whereas, so little do we know our own characters, that it is common for us all to think ourselves *naturally well disposed*, and to say of many a one, who not only neglects his duty to God, but violates almost every moral obligation to his neighbour, that, with all his

[1] Gen. viii. 21. [2] Jer. xvii. 9. Matt. xv. 19.

faults poor man! he has upon the whole a *very good heart!!*

Some indeed would persuade us that the human mind is at first, but as a *sheet of blank paper*, alike susceptible of good, or evil impressions. But though this indeed is true respecting *innate ideas*, it does not necessarily follow, that it must be so too of *innate propensities*. Alas! do not facts too plainly prove the contrary? We shall still find that whether men be natives of Athens, Rome, Paris, or Hindostan, they are in a great measure enslaved by the same selfish principles; and prove the executioners and tormentors of each other. No sooner does the infant mind begin to dawn, than the seeds of evil begin to spring up; and anger, envy, pride and perverseness require the timely hand of correction and restraint to prevent the most dangerous consequences. And how is this to be accounted for, and whence is it, that so vast a proportion of moral evil universally prevails, if the heart of man be equally inclined to what is good?

The Scriptures alone afford us any elucidation of this truth; a truth, which though acknowledged by many of the greatest men both of ancient and modern times, has never in any other way been satisfactorily accounted for. Proud infidelity may indeed object to the simple narrative contained in the word of God; and pretend to oppose insurmountable difficulties to the plain declarations of the inspired writers. But then, these difficulties are equally inexplicable on every other plan; since the first entrance and existence of moral and physical evil can no more be accounted for by the Deist, than by the Christian. Nor are such investigations at all suited to our capacities. St. Paul tells us, that "through one "man sin entered into the world, and death "by sin, and so death passed upon all men for "that all have sinned [1]." Facts fully prove the mournful assertion. The earth is filled with various miseries, the very existence of which declare, that there must be in sin a far greater evil, than, from ignorance of the holy character of God, and our various obligations

[1] Rom. v. 12.

to him, we are apt to conceive. And how can we reply better, than in the words of the same apostle "O! the depths of the riches both of "the wisdom and knowledge of God! how "unsearchable are his judgments and his ways "past finding out[1]!"

That all mankind are sinners, and have transgressed the law of perfect love to God and man, which was given as the condition of our obtaining eternal life, cannot surely be denied. Temporal death and all the train of evils, to which human nature is exposed, are the consequences of transgression, in this world; eternal death everlasting punishment, is threatened in that to come. And is it not far more rational and becoming, for us to enquire, how this awful doom may be averted, than presumptuously to argue against the justice of God's dealings with his creatures, of which we are utterly incompetent to judge?

Such a beautiful order and harmony subsists between the great and essential principles of

[1] Rom. xi. 33.

Christianity; that, where it is truly received and properly understood, each doctrine is clearly seen to be intimately connected with the rest, in a manner which could not be conceived on a superficial acquaintance with divine truth. For example, were the doctrine of human depravity, and the strict requirements of God's holy law, really felt and acknowledged; the Saviour in whom we all profess to believe, could be no longer thought of with indifference, and almost discarded from modern pulpits; nor would the morality of Socrates and Plato be substituted for the divinity of St. Paul. For alas! why is this, but because men are ignorant of the great end for which the Son of God became incarnate; and unconscious how greatly they stand in need of the salvation which he died to purchase, and which he is now exalted to bestow?

The condemnation to which we all are exposed by our innumerable offences against an infinitely just and holy God, cannot be averted by any obedience of our's; since our best duties are defective, and in every thing we fall

inconceivably short of the unerring rule by which we are to be judged. And yet, nothing less than perfect obedience is required of us: for, say the apostles, "cursed is every one "that continueth not in *all things* written in "the book of the law to do them[1]"—and "he "that offendeth in *one point* is guilty *of all*[2]." But alas! instead of offending in one point, "in many things we offend all;" and far from discharging, are continually augmenting, the enormous debt we owe. Who will have the temerity to assert that he has never broken the commands of God in thought, word, or deed? Nay, who will venture to affirm that he can observe them without any deviation only for a single day? And yet, were it possible for us so to do, during the remainder of our lives, this could not be sufficient to atone for what is past, any more than the future good behaviour of a criminal, who had but in *one instance* transgressed the laws of the land, could exculpate him from guilt; or than a person could discharge a debt he had contracted, by ever after paying ready money for what he purchased.

[1] Gal. iii. 10. [2] Jam. ii. 10.

One great source of mistakes in this matter is, that men regard only the second table of the law; and think, if they do but outwardly observe the duties they owe their neighbours, their state is as safe, as their character appears respectable. They forget that infidelity, self-exaltation, contempt or neglect of God, though not directly injurious to society, may, in the sight of the Almighty, be as heinous as the most scandalous immoralities. But if we impartially examine our own hearts, and consider the holiness of that God who is "of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity;" and the spirituality and extent of his law, which takes cognizance of the inmost desires and imaginations of the heart; we shall form a very different estimate of our characters. Let us call to mind only, the vain and incoherent thoughts that mix even with our religious duties; the corrupt and selfish motives from which many of our most specious actions spring; the numerous instances in which we have transgressed the third commandment, and used those awful words, GOD! LORD! CHRIST! in common conversation without

once adverting to their sacred import—Let us reflect on our frequent profanation of the sabbath, and the various emotions of pride, anger, envy and resentment, that have at different times arisen in our minds, and which, though perhaps long since forgotten by us, are as present to God's all-seeing eye, as if they were this moment committed: and surely we shall be constrained to say with the Psalmist, " if thou Lord shouldest mark iniqui-" ties, O Lord, who could stand ?" On such a review it must be obvious, that none of the sinful sons of men could find acceptance with their Creator, if it were not for that stupendous love which appointed a way, wherein mercy might be exercised consistently with justice, and guilt removed without the offender's suffering condign punishment. If that Saviour, through whom alone peace and pardon can be obtained, had not come down to earth and expired on the cross for our redemption.

The sacrifices under the old Testament dispensation were chiefly intended to typify,

and shadow forth this great design. The apostle tells us "without shedding of blood "there is no remission [1];" and likewise that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls "and of goats should take away sin [2];" but that "Christ was once *offered* to bear the "sins of many [3]." "He was wounded for "*our* transgressions," says the prophet, "he "was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastise-"ment of *our* peace was upon him and with "*his* stripes, *we* are healed. All we like sheep "have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid "on him the iniquity of us all [4]:" and in a correspondent passage St. Peter declares, that "he bare *our sins* in his own body on the tree [5]."

The same prophet and apostles that speak thus strongly concerning the sufferings and humiliation of the Messiah, who stooped so low for the recovery of fallen man; abound also, with testimonies to the dignity of his character. Isaiah tells us even, that he was

[1] Heb. ix. 22. [2] Heb. x. 4. [3] Heb. ix. 28.
[4] Isai. liii. 5, 6. [5] 1 Pet ii. 24.

no less than the mighty God, the everlast-
" ing Father, the Prince of Peace [1]:" and St. John, that " in the beginning was the Word " and the Word was with God and the Word " *was* God—by whom all things were made, " and without whom was not any thing made " that was made [2]." And can we suppose, that, as some assert, this divine Person " whom all " the angels of God worship [3]," exercised such astonishing condescension for no other purpose, than to instruct us in moral duties, and to set us an *example* of holy obedience! Reason alone, might suffice to shew the absurdity of such an opinion; and revelation plainly declares, that this great event was designed for a far more important purpose. Through the mediation of Christ alone it is, that they who repent and believe the gospel can be restored to the favour of their offended Judge; while the punishment, being thus transferred from the criminal to so great and glorious a victim, affords a brighter display of God's holy abhorrence of sin, than would have resulted from the destruction of the

[1] Isai. ix. 6. [2] John. i. 1. 3. [3] Heb. i. 6.

whole human race. And thus the character He gave of himself to his servant Moses is most strikingly illustrated: "the Lord, the "Lord God, merciful and gracious, long "suffering, and abundant in goodness and "truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for-"giving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and "that will by no means clear the guilty[r]."

This astonishing display of the divine perfections, in the character and humiliation of the Saviour, was doubtless that, which rendered him so excellent in the eyes of apostles and primitive Christians; while, to those, who feel little or nothing of their own guilt and danger, there appears "no beauty or comeli-"ness that they should desire him."

It is certain that the doctrines of human depravity, and our absolute need of a Mediator, are of all others the most offensive to the pride and self sufficiency of our hearts; and therefore the atonement and intercession of Christ were not more necessary to bring us

[r] Exod. xxxiv. 6.

into reconciliation with God, than are the influences of the Holy Ghost to convince us of our true state and character, and to make us willing to accept of the salvation proposed to us. By divine grace alone we are enabled to exercise that genuine repentance, which consists in unfeigned sorrow for sin, and abhorrence of every evil way; and that *living faith*, which realizes invisible and eternal things, and renounces all dependence on ourselves, to rely entirely on the sacrifice and merits of Jesus Christ: though at the same time it is always productive of good works and heavenly tempers, as the only indubitable evidence of our sincerity.

The Scripture universally abounds with assertions to this effect; and the language of our articles and church service strongly inculcates our need of divine assistance, for the attainment of any truly good and gracious dispositions. But though many outwardly *assent* to this important truth, it is too often the custom to contradict in the pulpit what has been delivered in the desk. And after the

congregation have just been confessing themselves ' *miserable sinners*;' imploring forgiveness through " the Lamb of God that " taketh away the sins of the world," and beseeching God to ' cleanse the thoughts of ' their hearts by the *inspiration* of his Holy ' Spirit,' they will perhaps, hear much of *moral rectitude*, the *dignity* of human nature, and the ability we possess of rendering ourselves good and virtuous: and thus numbers go away under the impression that they are such amiable *meritorious* persons, as need neither conversion, pardon, or sanctification!

This is a melancholy, and frequent delusion. And yet the nature of things, as well as the declaration of Scripture, might convince us that a very material change *must* take place in our judgments and affections, before we can serve God in the way that He requires.

We are told by Solomon, who had made ample trial of every earthly enjoyment, that " Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and

"all her paths are peace [1];" and by the apostle John, that to those who love God "his commandments are not grievous [2]." But does this indeed appear to be the sentiment of the most of those who are called Christians? In respect of such as are living in open violation of moral duties, or altogether neglecting the outward forms of worship; there certainly can need little to prove, that if the Bible be right they *must be wrong*. But even with numbers, whose conduct in society entitles them to respect and esteem; the worship of God, if considered as somewhat necessary to their safety, is deemed wearisome and insipid, and that, in which of all things else, they are perhaps most afraid of exceeding.

In almost every other cause than religion, in every other relation than that of man to his Creator, ardour and fervency of spirit; fidelity, zeal, alacrity, and love are not only allowed but admired. Who ever complained of a person's being too grateful to his benefactor, or too faithful to his friend? a

[1] Prov. iii. 17. [2] John v. 3.

child that was too dutiful to his parent, or a patriot too devoted to his country? And yet —how common is it to hear people censured for too much devotedness to their God! 'The Almighty,' say they, 'does not expect 'such strictness, nor require so much of our 'time to be employed in his service; and if 'we do but perform our duties to our fellow 'creatures, it is of little moment what we 'think in matters of religion.' As if our behaviour to our fellow worms were of more importance, than the disposition of our hearts towards the glorious Author of our being!—as if it were possible to love too much, or serve too diligently, Him, who is infinitely wise and good, and who hath this claim above all on our affections—that "he sent his Son to be "the propitiation for our sins[1]!" Surely, as the poet observes,

'On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm,
'Passion is reason, transport temper here.'

YOUNG.

'But to him,' as an admired writer of the present day observes, 'who acts from the nobler

[1] 1 John iv. x.

'motives of love, and the animating power of 'the christian hope, the exercise is the re-'ward, the permission the privilege, and the 'work the wages. He does not carve out 'some miserable pleasure, and stipulate for 'some meagre diversion to pay himself for 'the hard performance of his duty, who, in 'that very performance experiences the high-'est pleasure, and feels the truest gratification 'of which his nature is capable[1].' And surely, whatever men may think, no services, that spring from any other source than this, can be at all acceptable to that God who requires us to "give him our hearts;" and in whose sight many of those actions, which are admirable in the world's esteem, being performed from corrupt and selfish motives, appear no better than *splendid sins*.

We should perhaps be highly offended with any one, who expressed a doubt of our loving God. But let us beware of self deception on this most important subject; and consider how little we should value the services of a

[1] Miss H. More.

child or a domestic, however frequent and assiduous, (a recommendation not now very common in religious worship) did we know at the same time, that he looked forward with impatience to the hour that would emancipate him from these duties; and that he returned to them with reluctance and disgust.

The felicity of heaven is represented, as consisting in the continual service of God and the society of holy angelic spirits. And can it be doubted that a great revolution must take place in the minds of most men, to fit them for the enjoyment of a state like this? Can it be supposed, that they who seek for happiness in earthly pursuits, would be delighted with such employment and society? or that those who have hitherto said of the Lord's day "what a weariness it is!" would rejoice to keep an eternal sabbath in heaven? It is true indeed that we all naturally desire exemption from suffering, and must be pleased with the thoughts of eternal felicity; but then every one will *imagine* a heaven adapted to his prevailing inclination. The ambitious

will amuse himself with ideas of splendour and exaltation; the dissipated and licentious would, with Mahomet, desire a paradise replete with the gratifications of sense; and the philosophic, perhaps with peculiar self complacency and proud contempt of the former, will look forward to a state where, emancipated from the narrow limits by which he is now confined, he shall range, without restraint through the unbounded fields of science, and be continually making new acquisitions in the discovery of truth. The weight of misery and oppression too, under which numbers groan, may extort a sigh for that land, where the "wicked cease from trou-"bling and the weary are at rest." But the Christian only, taught by divine grace to see the vanity and insufficiency of all sublunary enjoyments, the glory of the divine perfections, and the beauty of holiness, *really* desires the heaven described in the Scripture, for what it is in its *own nature*; and conceives aright of the happiness that is to be found in the presence and service of God.

Hence it is said by Him who cannot err, "unless we be converted, we shall not enter "into the kingdom of God [x]:"—that is, unless an entire change be produced in our dispositions and affections here, we cannot be fitted for that blissful state hereafter. The unlimited exercise of evil passions is alone sufficient to render the subjects of them miserable; and we find that even in this life, where we are under various restraints of education and human laws which will not exist in another world, *sin* is the chief source of the miseries with which the earth abounds. In the breast where pride, resentment, and ambition harbour, peace will never dwell. Heaven itself could not afford felicity to an unholy heart; while on the contrary, virtue may be deemed its own reward in another sense than is commonly intended. For besides, that complacency which naturally arises from the consciousness of doing right; the very exercise of holy affections—love to God, benevolence to man, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness—is inseparably connected with inward tranquillity, being, as it

[x] Matt. xviii. 3.

were, the very health of the soul. Is it not then, our obvious duty, and our highest interest to implore the aid of that divine Spirit, who is graciously promised to all who ask for Him [1]; to subdue our evil propensities, to teach us the knowledge of God and of ourselves; and to create in us a real taste for those sublime and refined enjoyments, which will not only be the portion of sincere Christians in a future state, but are in some measure to be experienced while here on earth?

We are baptized into the sacred name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST. But, it is to be feared, according to the religion most prevalent in the present day, that the character and offices of the Son and of the Spirit are almost entirely neglected and overlooked; and this, by persons who do not avowedly deny the deity of either. It was far otherwise with the primitive Christians.—While we find the disciples of old, often expressing their gratitude to God the Father for having provided the way of salvation, we may

[1] Luke xi. 13.

observe them also declaring their reliance on the atonement and merits of the Son, with a high sense of his love and condescension; "unto Him that loved us and washed us from "our sins in his own blood and hath made us "kings and priests unto God and his Father; "unto Him be glory and dominion for ever[1]." —And their dependence on the Holy Spirit as the Author of all grace and consolation: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we "know not what to pray for as we ought, but "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for "us." "Now the God of hope fill you "with all joy and peace in believing, that ye "may abound in hope through the power of "the Holy Ghost[2]." These, with other instances, too numerous to adduce, may suffice to shew the ideas that were entertained in the apostles' days on this momentous subject.

Let no one deem it a matter of indifference, what he thinks on so important a part of divine truth. If the infinite God has indeed vouchsafed to give us a revelation of himself, He

[1] Rev. i. 5, 6. [2] Rom. viii. 26. xv. 13.

most certainly requires us to receive his testimony with submission and simplicity. And it cannot reasonably be supposed, that when we are favoured with every means of instruction, the Almighty will accept that worship which is offered up to Him under a notion of his character and attributes, which is essentially erroneous. This is not to adore the God of the Bible, but a being formed by our own imagination: and we are told that "all men "should honour the Son, even as they honour "the Father[1];" and that "whosoever deni-"eth the Son, the same hath not the Father[2]."

Throughout the new Testament we find the same divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and almighty power ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the same supreme love and obedience required from us by Jesus Christ, as is declared to be due to God alone. And therefore it must certainly be inferred that not only are we, in order to our acceptance, bound to *acknowledge* this important mystery; but really

[1] John. v. 23. [2] 1 John. i. 23.

to glorify God—as Father, Son, and Spirit, by our habitual dependence on each, in the great concern of our salvation; and by constantly living to the praise of this incomprehensible Being, to whom we owe such inexpressible obligations.

CHAPTER IV.

The genuine tendency of Christian principles.

THOSE principles, which are really received into our hearts, have an inseparable effect on the actions and conduct of our lives. And thus we see in general, that the religion of most nominal Christians in the present age differs from that of ancient believers, as widely in practice as in doctrine.

But what then, it may be said, are the effects, which would result from a reception of the principles that have been hinted at? What would be the consequence of a person's decidedly engaging in a religious course of life, from a deep conviction of the vanity and emptiness of all earthly enjoyments, and a serious concern for the safety of that *inva-*

luable treasure within him, his immortal soul; which must be either supremely happy, or inconceivably wretched to all *eternity?* Would he not be rendered melancholy, sullen, and morose? Would he not become indifferent to the interests of his fellow creatures, and the obligations and endearments of relative life? And above all, if convinced of his own demerit and utter inability to atone for his sins, and procure acceptance with God by any of his own performances, would he not, thus *wholly* depending on the sacrifice and merits of his Mediator, become regardless of his conduct, and walk even with less uprightness and circumspection than before?

Such indeed are the fatal inferences that men *may* draw from divine truth, as some noxious insects will collect poison from the sweetest flowers. But though religion hath her counterfeits, and, sad to say! there are not wanting many whose hypocrisy and inconsistency disgrace her; far different indeed will be the effect produced on those who

are taught by God himself to "receive the "truth in love."

We see the followers of our blessed Lord for instance, after relinquishing all the comforts and interests of this life, for a state of poverty, contempt and persecution; the most chearful and contented of mankind: "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet "making many rich; having nothing, and "yet possessing all things[1]." We behold them, while they entertained the sincerest abhorrence for sin; like their divine Master touched with the tenderest compassion for sinners;—symphathizing with the sufferings of others; and as active and self-denying in benevolent exertions for the welfare of mankind, as ever was an Alexander or a Cæsar, to establish his fame on the ruin of unnumbered fellow creatures.

Nor are these illustrious instances confined to the remote ages of antiquity. Even the present can afford us many bright examples

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 10.

of the power and excellency of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is by no means designed here to contend in the least degree for any particular sect or party; but to observe, that whenever pure and genuine Christianity is received into the heart, it produces such salutary and blessed effects, as no other system ever did. Many great and useful actions have been performed in the world, which have excited the admiration of mankind, and afforded ample subjects for the panegyricks of poets and historians. Many moralists and philosophers have made high pretensions to virtue and contentment: but it is the religion of the Bible alone, that brings solid and lasting peace into the soul, and pervades the inmost dispositions of the heart. It is this alone, however it may escape the eye of observation, and pass unnoticed, or despised by those, who deem *humility meanness*, and *piety enthusiasm*, that is truly amiable and lovely, and will admit of the closest examination. The work of grace, in this respect, may be said to resemble the works of creation—as the most curious and beautiful productions of human ingenuity,

when viewed through the microscopick glass, will not bear comparison with the simplest flower; so, could we discern the secret springs of action by which men are influenced, and trace them in all their most retired situations; we should perceive the greatest hero or moralist that ever lived, fall unspeakably below the meanest Christian.

In vain do we seek for happiness in the world.—We shall never find it out of the school of Christ. Here genuine peace indeed resides. Not, because the disciples of Jesus are endowed with more external advantages, or are more exempted from sufferings and disappointments than others; for they have often a larger share of them. But, because '*humility* 'is the parent of *contentment*,' and he who has been led to see his desert of God's displeasure, and at the same time is possessed of a lively hope in his mercy through the merits and mediation of his Redeemer, will not be apt to murmur at the dispensations of Providence, and to think himself hardly dealt by, when he sees numbers all around, no worse

by nature than himself, enduring many evils from which he is exempt, and devoid of various comforts with which he is endowed. Rather like the patriarch Jacob, he will be ready to say, "I am not worthy of *the least* of all "the mercies and of all the truth which thou "hast shewn unto thy servant [1]." The consideration too of the Redeemer's example will have a powerful effect, to reconcile his servant to a life of hardship, poverty, or contempt. While he contemplates the LORD OF GLORY, born in a stable—lying in a manger—at one time enduring hunger, thirst, and weariness—at another, making a thankful repast on some coarse barley bread and a few small fishes—he will see how ill it becomes the Christian to desire the honours and luxuries of life; and thus learn, with the apostle "in whatever "state he is, therewith to be content [2]."

And should it even please the Father of mercies to visit his friends and followers with the heaviest afflictions; the recollection, that all events are under the disposal of infinite

[1] Gen. xxxii. 10. [2] Phil. iv. 11.

wisdom and goodness, will repress the rising murmur; and diffuse a delightful calm through the soul, far superior to the exultation that arises from earthly prosperity. Even in these days, the consolations of religion are sometimes seen to raise the greatest sufferers above all their temporal afflictions; and to make them triumph, when human nature unsupported would sink into dejection or despair.

Who but the Christian for instance, can look with stedfastness and serenity, nay, often with joy and gladness, on the approach of that solemn hour, which will not only separate him from the most loved earthly scenes and companions; but convey his spirit to an untried, unchangeable state, and bring him into the awful presence of an infinitely great and holy God? *Infidelity* will indeed sometimes, though seldom, steel the heart against such important considerations; and the lamentable ignorance, in which most men live, both of God and of themselves, may draw a veil over these tremendous scenes, and soothe them into a fatal stupor and security. But it

is the sincere disciple of Christ alone, who, at the same time that he impartially reviews his whole conduct, and sees sin in all it's malignity and awful consequences, can resign his soul, with the most perfect composure and a hope full of immortality, into the hand of Him who made it.

Yes!—The experience of many ages proves, that while the dwellings of pomp and magnificence have been, for the most part, habitations of vexation and discontent; religion has often filled with brightness the darkest dungeon, and enabled its followers to rejoice in torments and at the stake!

But the happy effects of genuine piety are not confined merely to the possessor. In some measure, as far as permitted, their benign influence is extended to all who come within their reach. The Christian, happy in himself, is desirous that all mankind should participate in the mercies he enjoys; and endeavours, as far as possible, to promote that blessed end. Hence we see some, powerfully

impelled by the most disinterested benevolence and philanthropy, to visit remote and barbarous climes, foregoing all the comforts of domestic life; while others labour with unwearied diligence, and devote the greatest part of their property, to spread the knowledge of divine truth in the regions of heathenism and superstition, and to relieve the wants and miseries of their fellow creatures. And those, who have neither opportunity nor ability for such signal and extraordinary services, will be aiming in the more private walks of life, by an amiable deportment and a constant endeavour after usefulness, to adorn the gospel; and as much as possible to follow His example, whose delight it was, continually to be going about and doing good.

And yet, after the most assiduous endeavours to glorify God and do good to man, the disciple of Christ will be far from *valuing* himself on the services he has performed. On the contrary, considering how imperfectly he complies with the precepts enjoined him, and what inadequate returns he makes for the

inestimable blessings he has received; he will avert his eyes from *self:* or beholding only repeated cause for gratitude and humiliation, will be ready, with a contrite and adoring spirit, to fall down at the feet of his Redeemer, still saying "God be merciful to me, a sin-"ner!"

Much more might be said to prove that no system has ever yet existed, capable of producing so much happiness, so much virtue, as the doctrines and precepts of Christianity—but this must for the present suffice. Would prejudice permit us to make the enquiry, or did self-interest prompt us to the search, many characters might be found, probably in all the various orders of society, who would prove, far more powerfully than the feeble testimony of words, the truth of what has been asserted. The following chapter, however, will contain a striking instance of the happy change, that is sometimes produced by divine grace on the minds of the gay and unbelieving, and the salutary effects that arise from a sincere reception of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

CHAPTER V.

A happy family.

Mr. F—is a gentleman of a respectable family and genteel fortune. His understanding is good, his external deportment engaging, his natural temper such, as the world usually calls generous and humane. But, owing in a great measure to the ill effects of a mistaken education, and the dissipated associates of his youth; he had unhappily acquired at an early period, a contempt for revealed religion, and a taste for the fashionable follies of the age.

About the time that Mr. F—obtained the possession of his estate, he married a very amiable and sensible woman; who not long after their union, became deeply convinced

of the importance of a religious life; and was led to seek her happiness in sublimer pleasures than any this world can afford.

It was no small mortification to Mrs. F. to see her beloved partner far from peace, almost a stranger to domestic comfort, and eagerly pursuing a good he could not attain, amid all the gay and dissipated amusements, that folly can suggest or fashion sanction. In vain did she uniformly endeavour, by the most obliging assiduities and endearing manners, to allure him to a more rational course of life. Though his behaviour to her was by no means marked with unkindness or asperity; the principles he had imbibed, and the habits he had contracted, rendered him so insensible to her affectionate remonstrances: that had not a superior power interposed, she might have continued all her days to mourn in secret, an affliction which it required nothing less than the comforts of true religion to support. Sometimes indeed, when occasion required, Mrs. F—would bear her testimony against error and profaneness; or

now and then, when a very suitable opportunity occurred, she would venture with becoming modesty and gentleness, to expatiate on the excellency and importance of divine truth, and tenderly remonstrate with her husband on his indifference to "the things that belonged to his eternal peace." But if, in some favoured moments, she obtained a patient hearing and excited a transient conviction; he for the most part treated the doctrines of the gospel with supercilious contempt, and rested satisfied in the persuasion, that *if there were a future state* of existence, his *own merits* would fully ensure his felicity. Mr. F. was however almost as little remarkable for beneficence to his fellow creatures, as attention to the duties he owed to his Creator. For though the dissipated and extravagant may sometimes drop a tear over the tale of misery, and make high pretensions to generosity, it is seldom either in the power or the disposition of such characters to act like genuine philanthropists. The meekness and long suffering inculcated by the Scriptures, the happy effects of which this gentleman,

both felt and acknowledged in his wife; appeared to him little better than meanness of spirit and narrowness of mind—In his opinion, ambition and resentment were some of the noblest qualities of the soul, and the firmness of the Stoicks far superior to the humility of Jesus Christ: though it was by no means unusual for him to feel extremely mortified by the most trivial disappointment, and to have his temper greatly ruffled by the slightest contradiction!

One evening when Mr. F—was returning on horse back from N . . . . races, after drinking rather freely with some of his gay companions, (a vice he was not generally addicted to,) his horse suddenly took fright; and he, not being well able to manage him, was thrown with great violence to the ground, and received a dangerous contusion in his head.

He was brought home senseless, in which situation he continued some days, while his recovery appeared extremely doubtful; till

at length, the violence of the fever having subsided, he gradually recovered the exercise of reason. No sooner was he restored to the use of this invaluable talent, than awaking, as it were, from a dream of fatal security, he became sensible to all the dangers of his situation, and was filled with anxiety and alarm. A variety of distressing considerations pressed upon his mind, which for a time he endeavoured to conceal: till at length, unable longer to keep silence, he resolved to disclose the anguish that he felt, to his amiable and afflicted wife. On Mrs. F—'s coming to his bedside— 'My dearest EMMA,' said he, fixing his eyes which were full of tears earnestly upon her, 'to what a melancholy 'state am I reduced! my health, which I 'have hitherto enjoyed almost without un-'interruption, is destroyed by one unex-'pected blow; and my strength and viva-'city are exchanged for inexpressible lan-'guor. This day week was spent in the 'height of festivity, and now I am laid upon 'this sick bed—perhaps—never to rise from 'it more! Oh! I cannot tell you how vain

'and worthless all those things *now* appear
'to me, which *then* engrossed my attention:
'my life has been spent in a way that has
'neither been acceptable to my Creator, nor
'beneficial to my fellow creatures—and—a
'few days more, and perhaps it will be at an
'end; and then—what am I to expect? oh!
'I know not—and scarcely dare to think:
'for if the things I have often heard from
'you be true, what an account shall I have
'to give of mispent time and abused talents!
'Yes! if the Bible be indeed the word of
'God, I am undone for ever. I have neg-
'lected and despised the blessings it reveals;
'and preferred a few short years of vain un-
'satisfying pleasures, to a state of unchange-
'able, everlasting happiness. Though I
'endeavoured to suppress it, I have some-
'times thought of these things when in
'health, for I was then far from being truly
'happy; but now, that I seem on the bor-
'ders of the grave, words cannot express
'to you, the view I have of eternity. My
'soul, EMMA, clings to life—methinks I
'would give worlds if I had them, for time

'to search into these subjects, which I have 'hitherto so shamefully neglected; and to seek 'the favour of that God, whom I have of-'fended by my vain, irreligious life. Oh! 'how dreadful is the least degree of uncer-'tainty, when our eternal interest may be at 'stake! I am now little able to make enquiry 'after truth—why did I defer it to an hour 'like this? why refuse to listen to the tender 'admonition of the best of friends?'

Such, and many more, were the bitter reflections that arose in Mr. F—'s mind while confined to a bed of sickness. His affectionate partner rejoiced, even in the midst of her affliction, to find him impressed with a proper sense of his alarming situation; the danger of which, whatever anguish might result from the discovery, regard to his eternal welfare did not permit her to conceal. But she would have felt still more satisfaction at the sentiments he expressed, had she not known many mournful instances of persons in similar circumstances, who, on recovery to health, be-

came more dissipated and irreligious than before.

It pleased God however, 'from whom all 'holy desires, all good counsels, and all just 'works do proceed,' to complete the happy change he had begun. A long and dangerous illness afforded Mr. F— much time for reflection; he considered carefully his past life, and looked forward to that which was to come. When the first alarms of his conscience, and the tumult of his thoughts subsided, he made it his business to examine diligently into the authenticity of revelation: and after he was satisfied on that important point, he daily searched the scriptures, with earnest prayer to God for the teaching of his Spirit, that he might be instructed in the real meaning of the inspired writers. Being at length 'fully persuaded in his own mind,' he determined, by the assistance of divine grace, that if his life were spared; it should be spent in a far different manner than it formerly had been. This resolution he was ever after enabled to maintain; while, as di-

vine truth opened to his view, and he was led to contemplate the awful holiness of God's character, and his stupendous mercy and condescension in the work of redemption, his heart often glowed with delightful affections.—Hope took place of fear; and the more he saw of his own demerit, and the evil of his former conduct, the more he was filled with love and admiration of the Redeemer, who gave himself, to be a sacrifice for the sins of ungrateful and rebellious man. In short, every thing wore a new aspect to him: his preservation, and recovery from so dangerous an accident, the kindness and attention of those around him, and the many providential blessings he enjoyed, all afforded him matter of praise and thankfulness. And he found so many sources of peace and consolation, that in his sick room he felt more genuine happiness and contentment, than he had experienced all his life before.

The great alteration that had taken place in this gentleman's sentiments and disposition, it may readily be supposed, produced

a correspondent effect on all his future conduct: and Mrs. F— whose supreme desire it was, to live in every respect consistently with the character and profession of a Christian, had now the inexpressible satisfaction to see her husband concurring in her designs; and on his recovery to health, devising with her such a plan of life, as might conduce as much as possible to glorify God and benefit his fellow creatures.

In order to this, Mr. F— did not deem it requisite wholly to withdraw from public scenes, and to spend the remainder of his days in useless solitude. He recollected that neither the examples nor precepts in the new Testament seem to favour a state of seclusion from mankind; but, on the contrary, while conformity to the world is strictly prohibited, we are commanded "so to let our "light shine before men, that they may see "our good works and glorify our father, "which is in heaven[1]."

At the same time therefore, that this ex-

[1] Matt. v. 16.

emplary character, superior to the contemptuous sneers of the profane and dissipated, determined to break with most of his former acquaintances, and no longer suffer himself to be enslaved with fashions and maxims, that both his reason and his religion disapproved; he avoided all unnecessary preciseness and austerity, and mixed with mankind just so much, as his situation in life required to render him useful to society.

To follow this gentleman in his public capacity, for he several years filled up an important station in the community—to point out the disinterested benevolence and unshaken integrity, which stamped his actions, and rendered him superior to the interests of a party, would exceed the limits of this little work.—It will better suit the present purpose, to consider him in his more retired and domestick life; and to observe the happy effects, which, even in this world, are to be derived from genuine Christianity.

Without entering into an examination of the ill effects of fashionable amusements,

which dissipate the mind, and render it unfit even for the common scenes of life, much more for the duties and comforts of religion; it may easily be conceived that persons of the sentiments and dispositions which have been described, could find little satisfaction in such enjoyments. Mr. and Mrs. F— had already too well made the experiment, not to *feel* that these pleasures are nothing worth, and at best cannot be deemed more rational than the toys and diversions of children.—Books—conversation—the society of a few pious and judicious friends—natural philosophy and rural recreations, fill up their leisure hours; time never hangs heavy on their hands: for as they are convinced that *discontent* is the certain offspring of *indolence*, inclination as well as duty, daily prompts them to occupy their talents in something that may be useful to themselves and others. 'Few people,' say they, 'have any idea of the good that might be done, and the satisfaction that might be obtained, by a constant endeavour to redeem those moments, which are wasted in indolence and trifling. It is

the delight and privilege of the Christian, to consecrate his powers to God: he emulates those blessed spirits, who like "flames of "fire" are prompt to execute their Creator's will, "and delight to do his commandments, "hearkening to the voice of his word." He reflects on the numbers who are incapacitated, by disease and various other calamities, from engaging in any active service; and thanks the gracious Author of all his mercies, for the exercise of reason, and the enjoyment of those powers which he can employ for the welfare of mankind. In all his undertakings he desires to consider the Almighty's will; and the idea that he can look up, and say, this is the place which my heavenly Father hath allotted me—this is the work he hath appointed me to do—tends to reconcile him to every situation, and to sweeten every employment.'

Mr. and Mrs. F—'s family consists of a son and two daughters, whose education they carefully superintend; deeming it a most important duty and a delightful task. Mrs. F—

often expresses her surprise, that persons of any seriousness should deem a few external accomplishments, which in many instances might perhaps as well be acquired at home, preferable to the forming of their children's minds and morals; and venture to place their daughters in situations, where from the usual mode of instruction, and the different characters with whom they often associate, they are likely, not only to obtain little useful knowledge, but to imbibe many false and dangerous notions, which are suited only to cherish the evil dispositions of the heart. She says, the great end of education is, to teach young people to think justly; and our chief care should be to watch over and repress the first risings of evil tempers and propensities; which cannot duly be attended to, where a great number of persons are consigned to the government of a few.

Mr. F— also recollecting the many evils he had derived from being early educated at a public seminary, declares he can never consent that his son should be taught to prefer the

heroes of Homer to the disciples of Jesus Christ; and suffer him, by mixing with dissolute young men, to imbibe a poison that might never after be eradicated, and assume a confidence and audacity, which though at present the prevailing characteristick of youth, is truly disgusting to every man of sense.

Accordingly, if these young persons, though by no means deficient in accomplishments, would not make so elegant a figure in a ball-room, or converse so fluently on the latest fashion or most favourite opera dancer, as many in a similar rank of life; their parents have the satisfaction to know, that their minds are stored with useful knowledge;—that they have learned to discriminate between truth and error—that their deportment is modest, affable and unassuming—and that their hearts are simple, humble, and truly disposed to love and obey them. Indeed, one of the most striking features of Mr. F's family is, that it may be called a *family of love*. Here cheerfulness and serenity have taken place of levity and mirth; and genuine philanthropy, of stu-

died courtesy and unmeaning compliment; while each individual strives to fill up his proper place, and by an habitual sweetness of manner and uniform endeavour to please, to contribute to the welfare and comfort of the whole. You seldom, or never here, are wearied with those complaints of servants which are so frequent in many places. The domestics, carefully selected and kindly treated, consider their master and mistress almost in the light of parents; and would perhaps feel nearly as much pain to leave this peaceful habitation, as affectionate children, when for the first time they are about to quit the parental roof.

It is not however, in the least degree meant to insinuate, that any in this amiable family have attained to a degree of perfection inconsistent with the frailty of human nature:—this must not be supposed by us, and is still less thought of by themselves. No—could we see the persons that have been described in their most secret retirements, we should find them confessing and deploring before *Him* who "searcheth the hearts and trieth the

"reins," their daily omissions of duty, and their frequent transgressions of his holy law—many emotions of pride and vain glory—many risings of evil tempers and selfish dispositions—many vain, irreverent thoughts in sacred duties; which though unsuspected by others, fill them, like the holy prophet, with "shame and confusion of face," and lead them every day to see more clearly their need of a Mediator.

Neither is it even to be conceived, that in this happy society there is never any thing to be observed by others, but what is altogether approvable. Alas! here, as well as every where else, there are sometimes errors and improprieties, which interrupt the peace and harmony that generally prevail. But then, these evils are not prolonged and increased by resentment and mutual recrimination; since those, who are the most deeply convinced of their own imperfections, are ever the readiest to make allowance for the misconduct of others. The person who has offended, being reproved in a spirit of meekness, is

soon led to acknowledge, and make concession for his fault; or if this be not the case, that *sacred volume*, the unerring standard of right and wrong, which Mr. F— never fails to read daily in his family, points out what has been contrary to the Christian spirit, and restores things to their proper order. Indeed, the constant observance of *family worship*, a duty, which however unfashionable, this gentleman has steadily persevered in, ever since he seriously engaged in a religious life; has been found the happiest mean to preserve social order, peace, and love.

Mr. F— saw from the first many of the difficulties he should have to encounter, in pursuing the plan he had adopted; but he thought the sneers of a few giddy triflers, or shallow scepticks, were not to be put in competition with the favour of the King of heaven. Accordingly, among other things, he at once determined that the sacred day of rest, which he had unhappily so often wasted and profaned, but which now often proved to him a season of the greatest satisfaction,

should be entirely devoted to the service of God. All unsuitable visitants are of course excluded from his house: he and his family twice a day constantly attend the publick worship—not where the *genteelest* congregation is assembled; but where they may hear those ministers, who are most concerned for the glory of God and the eternal welfare of their hearers: while the intermediate hours of the day are divided between the duties of the closet, the instructing of children and servants, and serious improving conversation.

Many persons possessed of affluent fortunes are very ready to impart some of their abundance to the distressed; but there are few indeed, that in imitation of *his* example "who though he was rich yet for our sakes "became poor," are willing to deduct from their own luxuries and superfluities to relieve the indigent; and still fewer perhaps, who will not only *give*, but seek out, and sympathize with, the sons of misery and want. Yet it is surprising to think, if a proper atten-

tion were paid to this truly christian duty, how much might be done to alleviate the afflictions of mankind, even by persons in very moderate circumstances. But of this, Mr. and Mrs. F— are fully convinced, as well as of the glaring impropriety there is, in the followers of the meek and lowly Saviour vying in pomp and splendour with the great and gay. And therefore, though they are truly "lovers of hospitality" and careful in avoiding every appearance of parsimony and meanness, their table, furniture, and apparel are as remarkable for simplicity and frugality; as their conduct to others is renowned for enlarged liberality and beneficence. So much does a spirit of benevolence pervade this family, that the young ladies experience far more pleasure, in expending their pocket money to procure a garment for a poor person, than to purchase an elegant trinket, or a fashionable article of dress for themselves. Indeed in this respect, their hands as well as their purses, are at the service of the poor. For though Mrs. F— has naturally a great taste for elegant accomplishments, and in her

youth bestowed much time and pains to acquire them; she acknowledges that, since she has seen the real nature and excellency of religion, she cannot find much gratification in any employments, which do not some way or other conduce to the glory of God[1] and the welfare of her fellow creatures:—of course she does not greatly countenance the pursuits of those attainments which are chiefly cultivated in order to attract admiration and applause. And therefore many of the hours, which by others would be spent at the harpsichord, in curious needle works, and useless trifles, are by herself and her daughters appropriated, with far more heart-felt satisfaction, to the improvement of their minds, visiting the sick and afflicted, or working for the poor and destitute; by whom they have the happiness to be so beloved and valued, that the whole village around their country seat is enlivened and rejoiced at their appearance.

It can hardly be supposed however, that

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

Mr. and Mrs. F— with the views and sentiments they entertain, can rest satisfied *merely* in endeavours to contribute to the *temporal* welfare of their fellow creatures. The benevolence of their hearts, and their implicit regard to the authority of God's word, render it impossible for them to feel that sad indifference for the souls of men, which in modern days has obtained the mistaken appellation of *charity* or *candour*. 'Our Saviour 'and his apostles,' say they, 'cannot be sus-'pected of want of love to the human race; 'yet they warn us, in the most solemn man-'ner, of the awful consequences of an irreli-'gious life; and are very far from asserting, 'that every one may be saved in his own 'way, or the religion in which he was 'brought up. It is therefore certainly the 'duty of Christians to use their utmost efforts 'to convince men of their real character and 'situation, and of the necessity of faith and 'repentance[1].'

Deeply impressed with this conviction,

[1] Mark. xvi, 16. John. iii, 36. Acts. xx. 21.

Mr. F— does not hesitate, in whatever company he may be obliged to mix, if occasion require, to confess his sentiments and bear his testimony against vice and profaneness; while by letters, books and conversation, he endeavours among his relatives and friends, with the utmost tenderness and propriety, to inculcate the truth and importance of divine revelation, and the happiness of a life truly devoted to God. Nor does Mrs. F— decline an active part in this momentous duty. When she visits the sick and afflicted in the neighbourhood, to administer relief to their distresses, she seldom fails to put a religious book into their hands, or to say a few words that may leave a serious impression on their minds. And, as the education of youth is of the utmost consequence to the promotion of religion and the improvement of morals, she has lately established a school for the children of the poor, which she has placed under the tuition of a very pious and prudent woman, and carefully superintends herself. By such and various other means these amiable persons have adopted, it is hardly conceivable how much

reformation has been produced, and what salutary effects have resulted to those around them; while the happiness *they* experience is as far superior to any of the poor, short-lived enjoyments, that ambition or sensuality can afford, as the heavens are above the earth. Oh! that every reader of this feeble, but sincere attempt to point out the path of true contentment, might be prevailed on to make the experiment; and to seek for divine aid to enable him to lead a life as much devoted to God, and as beneficial to man!

CHAPTER VI.

Conclusion.

It may perhaps be objected, that in any situation, and especially the higher ranks of life, a line of conduct, such as has been described, could not possibly be maintained, without acting in many respects very different to the general customs of society; and, of course incurring the censure and contempt of the world around us. Let it be remembered however, that nothing less than a readiness to relinquish every temporal advantage, and a willingness to forego the applause and approbation of *men*, when put in competition with our duty, is expected by him who has an undoubted right to our supreme affections. Thus our Lord declares, "he that loveth father or mother more than

" me is not worthy of me, and he that " loveth son or daughter more than me, is " not worthy of me; and he that taketh not up " his cross and followeth after me, is not " worthy of me; he that findeth his life shall " lose it, and he that loseth his life for my " sake shall find it[1]." And if nothing less than this was required from the primitive Christians, in those days of danger and persecution; surely it cannot *now* be deemed too much that we observe our Saviour's precepts, and separate from the corrupt maxims and fashions of a vain irreligious world.

Nor are the difficulties to be encountered in this path so formidable, as are generally supposed. Imagination may indeed pourtray a religious life, as replete with gloom and melancholy; and, as exposing us, not only to the ridicule of the infidel and profane; but to the censure even of many moral and amiable members of the community. Experience however, will certainly prove, that " wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness,

[1] Matt. x. 3—39.

"and all her paths are peace." And he who acts consistently with the christian character, in all the various duties and relations of life, will, in time, if not imitated, at least often become respected by the very persons, who once most contemned and despised him—as self love, the most powerful principle in the human heart, commonly leads men to esteem those most, on whose integrity and benevolence they can best depend. It cannot however be denied, that the most exemplary Christians are unable by well doing so to "silence the ignorance of foolish men," as to escape all contempt or censure; for the scripture tells us that "all, who will live "godly in Christ Jesus, *must* suffer persecu- "tion." But admitting; that every true disciple were really exposed to the most complicated distresses of mind and body; what would these avail, when compared with the final state of happiness or misery, which awaits every human being on his departure from this world? What would be the greatest sufferings of the longest life on earth, compared with that ETERNITY to which we

are daily hastening, but as a drop of water to the ocean? In this view it was, that the apostle Paul, whose trials were heavy almost beyond example, could say "our *light afflic-* "*tion*, which is but for *a moment*, worketh "for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory, while we look not at the "things which are seen, but at the things "which are not seen; for the things which "are seen are temporal, but the things which "are not seen are *eternal*[1]."

Unhappily, however, the most of men look the contrary way; and either endeavour to dissipate all reflection on the subject, or to soothe themselves with sceptical and irreligious opinions; ridiculing every thing serious, and trying as much as possible to discredit all that is said concerning a future state. Like persons travelling on the edge of a tremendous precipice, who instead of cautiously observing their steps and seeking how they may escape destruction, close their eyes, and endeavour to forget their danger, by amusing themselves

[1] Cor. iv. 17, 18.

with the most trivial pursuits and fruitless speculations! We see our fellow creatures on every side daily sinking into the grave. We are sure our turn *must* come.—We know not, that our souls ſhall even for another day be separated from the world of spirits. And yet—we pass our lives insensibly away in vain and thoughtless amusement, often perhaps without once enquiring what may be our condition in that state, where we have every reason to believe that millions of ages hence, it will be with us as if we were only *beginning* to exist!

But though the mind may feel tolerably easy to trifle thus with the most important concerns, in the gaiety of youth and the enjoyment of health and prosperity; there *are seasons* when thoughts of a different kind are wont to occur. Solitude—sickness—the disappointment of our fondest wishes—above all, the prospect of entering on an unknown state, sometimes awaken the most careless and insensible. And then—in the near view of dissolution—let but a doubt intrude—the barest possibility of being mistaken where our

everlasting welfare is at stake—what anguish, what dismay must arise! And shall we defer these enquiries to a season that is of all others the most unsuitable to make them? When the mind is enfeebled by disease, and enveloped in darkness and confusion; and when, if there be any appearance of a desire to embrace the truth, there will perhaps remain no time nor opportunity for evincing the sincerity of our religion, either to ourselves or others?

And after all the cares and concerns which fill up this transitory life, "what shall it pro-" fit a man if he gain the whole world and lose " his own soul [1]?" Religion is either *all*, or *nothing*; and whatever some may pretend to the contrary, he alone is truly wise, who seeks the knowledge of God and of himself, and pursues that "peace which passeth all " understanding and which the world can " neither give nor take away." "Love not " the world," says the apostle John, "nei-" ther the things that are in the world, if

[1] Mark viii. 36.

"any man love the world, the love of the "Father is not in him. For all that is in the "world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the "eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Fa-"ther but of the world," "and the world pass-"eth away and the lust thereof; but he that "doeth the will of God abideth for ever[1]."

We know that "we have here no con-"tinuing city." Our choicest earthly comforts are liable to be torn from us every day; and there is an hour coming, in which the tenderest friends, and the most prosperous circumstances, can do nothing to alleviate our affliction. It will *then* avail us nothing, how rich, how honourable, how admired we have been: when nature is sinking under a death-like languor, and the soul just upon the verge of eternity, the sight of those loved objects who have here been our sweetest solace, will rather aggravate, than remedy our distress. At such a season, oh! who can describe the blessedness of that man, who hath an omnipotent arm to lean upon—a gracious Saviour to receive his departing spirit? Happy indeed,

[1] 1 John ii. 15, 16.

will he be found, and only he, who, "hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose "hope is in the Lord his God." May the Almighty teach us so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto true and heavenly wisdom; that in our various trials and disappointments here, we may be enabled to rely with sweet composure on him who makes "all things work together for good "to them that love him:"—and that when this painful dream of life is ended, we may awake in that blessed world, where there shall be no more death, pain, nor sorrow, but where all tears will be for ever wiped away!

THE END.

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